

**FROM AL-GHAZĀLĪ TO AL-RĀZĪ:
6TH/12TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS IN MUSLIM
PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY**

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According to Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771 / 1370), al-Ghazālī (d. 505 / 1111) was the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the Muslim faith at the end of the 5th / 11th century, whereas al-Rāzī (d. 606 / 1210) was the renewer of faith at the end of the 6th / 12th century.¹ That al-Ghazālī deserves such an honour can hardly be disputed, and his importance in the history of Islamic thought is generally recognised. However, the same cannot, as easily, be said of al-Rāzī, whose historical significance is far from being truly appreciated, and some of the most important books of whom still await publication. Much is known about his views on particular philosophical and theological problems, and about the historical backgrounds to, and the relations amongst, some of these views. Some rather general observations on his thought are also common; for instance, that he is a heavily philosophising Ash‘arī *mutakallim*, a master dialectician, and an influential critic of Ibn Sīnā.

What we wish to do in what follows is not to question such notions in any direct way, but to attempt a more precise understanding of some of the main underlying developments that occurred during that influential chapter in Muslim intellectual history, to which al-Rāzī is central. Some of these have been referred to briefly, and not always accurately, by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 / 1406). We need to examine the main relevant features within two closely-linked historical contexts: (a) al-Rāzī’s intellectual background, starting with al-Ghazālī, and including previously unexplored aspects of al-Rāzī’s immediate milieu;² and (b) his own philosophical and theological writings

¹ Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, ed. M. Tanahi *et al.*, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1992), vol. 1, p. 202.

² On the dearth of scholarship on philosophical activity in this crucial period, see Dimitri Gutas, “The heritage of Avicenna: The golden age of Arabic

and the main developments that can be detected in them when considered chronologically and *vis-à-vis* his intellectual background. These two contexts intersect almost theatrically in the lively dialectical setting of his record of some of his debates, the *Munāẓarāt*.

FROM AL-GHAZĀLĪ TO AL-RĀZĪ

Al-Ghazālī's Approach to Kalām

Ibn Sīnā's (d. 428 / 1037) legacy was a sophisticated philosophical system that appeared to many to surpass, even abrogate, previous philosophy. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629 / 1231) writes that he initially did not think much of more ancient philosophers, such as al-Fārābī and Themistius, because he "believed that Ibn Sīnā digested the entirety of wisdom and stuffed it in his books."³ Another author, from the 6th / 12th century, writes that, "it has become rooted in the hearts of some people nowadays that truth is whatever [Ibn Sīnā] says, that it is inconceivable for him to err, and that whoever contradicts him in anything he says cannot be rational."⁴ Ibn Sīnā's philosophy became attractive in some circles in the Sunni mainstream, not only for its sophistication, but also for its treatment of many theological and religious themes, such as the afterlife, destiny, prophecy and Sufi practice, without showing the Bāṭinī influence that pervaded the works of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.

The views of the *falāsifa*, Ibn Sīnā included, were then severely criticised by al-Ghazālī, some of whose general views on *kalām*, relevant to our present context, we should examine

philosophy, 1000–ca. 1350", in J. Janssens and D. De Smet (eds.), *Avicenna and his Heritage* (Leuven, 2001), pp. 81–97.

³ Quoted in: Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 688. Al-Baghdādī changes his mind afterwards: "The more I read into the books of the ancients, the more indifferent I became towards Ibn Sīnā's books." (Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the Arabic are mine).

⁴ Afḍal al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Alī ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth al-'ālam*, ed. M. Muhaqqiq (Tehran, 1998), p. 13 [= 342]. [The introduction to this same work is published also in Yahya Michot, "La pandémie avicennienne au VI^e / XII^e siècle", *Arabica*, 40 (1993): 288–344, at pp. 327–44. Page numbers in references to this part of Ibn Ghaylān's work will be to Muhaqqiq's edition first and (where applicable) to Michot's, in square brackets, second.]

briefly.⁵ He tells us, in the introduction of *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, of this book's general approach:

Let it be known that [our] objective is to alert those who think well of the *falāsifa* and believe that their ways are free from contradiction by showing the [various] aspects of their incoherence. For this reason, I do not enter into [argument] objecting to them, except as one who demands and denies, not as one who claims [and] affirms. I will render murky what they believe in [by showing] conclusively that they must hold to various consequences [of their theories . . .]. I, however, will not rise to the defence of any one doctrine.⁶

This negativism relates to the fact that al-Ghazālī considers the *Tahāfut* as a *kalām* work; for it serves one of the two essential functions he assigns to this discipline.⁷ This, primarily negativist function concerns the defence of the common orthodox creed, by the refutation of conflicting views.

The second function he assigns to *kalām* concerns dispelling doubts that may plague the average believer's mind, by providing persuasive proofs (*dalīl*) for the orthodox creed. As such, the *mutakallim* will arrive to more or less the same point at which the average uncritical imitator (*muqallid*) stands, namely mere belief (*i'tiqād*) in the truth of the formal expressions of the doctrines that constitute this creed.⁸ According to al-Ghazālī, real and direct positive knowledge of what these doctrinal formulations refer to can be sought through a higher theology, the 'science of spiritual illumination' (*ilm al-mukāshafa*), combined with spiritual discipline.

Given these two objectives that he specifies for *kalām*, al-Ghazālī holds that this discipline should be reverted to only when opponents or doubts appear; otherwise, it should be avoided. Learning and practicing *kalām* becomes a collective

⁵ Al-Ghazālī's views on *kalām* have been examined in: Richard M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham and London, 1994); Kojiro Nakamura, "Was Ghazālī an Ash'arite?", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tokyo Bunkoo*, 51 (1993): 1–24; Michael E. Marmura, "Ghazali and Ash'arism revisited", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 12 (2002): 91–110. The subject, however, is still in need of further study. For the purposes of this section, by no means intended as a comprehensive account of al-Ghazālī's position, a fresh examination of his works was found necessary.

⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1980); *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, trans. M. Marmura (Provo, Utah, 2000), p. 82 (Marmura's translation, with adjustments, pp. 7–8).

⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, 1983), p. 21.

⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Damascus, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 212; *Al-Arba'in fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo, 1925), p. 24.

obligation (*farḍ kifāya*), not an individual obligation (*farḍ ‘ayn*).

Al-Ghazālī, therefore, downgrades *kalām* considerably, with respect to its function and status. The majority of previous *mutakallimūn* considered *kalām* to have two objectives: (a) primarily, as some put it, “learning what can only be learnt through theological speculation (*naẓar*)”, which constitutes the foundation to recognising the validity of Revelation and to religious belief as a whole, and is thus obligatory upon everyone (e.g. that the world is created, and that the sending of prophets is conceivable); and (b) refuting opposing views.⁹ While al-Ghazālī downgrades the former objective from a pursuit of the highest humanly-possible knowledge, to the pursuit of persuasion and an inferior form of indirect knowledge, he greatly emphasises the latter, negativist objective.¹⁰

Now, al-Ghazālī is often credited with having promoted Aristotelian logic in *kalām*. But in what sense does he do so? And how does logic relate to the two functions he assigns to *kalām*?

In more than one place, al-Ghazālī indicates that logic is the methodological tool that should be used in *kalām*. For instance, he writes, vaguely, that “truth in issues falling within *kalām* (*kalāmiyyāt*) is known through” logic.¹¹ Equally vaguely, he states that logic is “of the same kind as what the *mutakallimūn* and [religious] speculative thinkers discuss in relation to proofs, the [*falāsifa*] differing from them only in expression and terminology, and in their more extensive examination of definitions and classifications”.¹² That logic is ‘of the same kind as’ something that the *mutakallimūn* already have is true, but only in the widest sense of ‘logic’. However, the suggestion that the only differences are in terminology and exhaustiveness is at best superficial, and in fact untenable. The *mutakallimūn* did not adhere, for instance, to Aristotelian criteria for demonstration, under whatever name. And although the *falāsifa* did analyse some types of premises and logical forms used by the *mutakallimūn*, they considered many to involve fallacies. As it

⁹ E.g. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī*, ed. D. Gimaret (Beirut, 1987), pp. 292–3.

¹⁰ The latter, he argues, was the sole objective of early Sunnī *kalām*, whereas the former is a later, accidental objective (*Al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. J. Saliba et al. [Beirut, 1980], pp. 91–3).

¹¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh*, pp. 123–4.

¹² Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh*, p. 104; cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 85.

is almost inconceivable that al-Ghazālī did not realise this, the second part of his statement should be treated as rhetorical, especially when its context is considered.¹³

Yet the most unambiguous indications of the link he establishes between logic and *kalām* are his two *kalām* works that rely explicitly on logic, *al-Qistās al-mustaqīm* and the *Tahāfut*, with its logical appendix, *Mi'yār al-'ilm*. So, let us assume that al-Ghazālī does indeed promote Aristotelian logic definitively and consistently in *kalām*, such that a *mutakallim* ought to be a logician. Ideally, we would expect al-Ghazālī to depart from the methods of inference used by previous *mutakallimūn*, which, by the standards of Aristotelian logic, are non-apodictic, but lead only to presumption (*ẓann*). However, he does not provide such criticism; and, in the *Mi'yār*, we seem to find criticism of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) only.¹⁴ Contrarily, he wants at least some readers to believe that the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa* had pretty much the same sort of logic.

We may test our assumption by examining the *Iqtisād*, another of his *kalām* works. He considers it superior to earlier *kalām* works, since it offers a type of theology that goes further in critical enquiry (*tahqīq*) and comes closer to true knowledge (*ma'rifa*).¹⁵ This assessment appears to rely ultimately on the superior methods of inference he adopts in it. But to what extent does al-Ghazālī depart, in the *Iqtisād*, from the methods of earlier *kalām*? We find clues in the introductory section on the forms of evidence (*manāhij al-adilla*) used in the book, where he writes:

Know that the methods of inference are manifold. We mention some of them in *Mihakk al-naẓar*, and we discuss them exhaustively in *Mi'yār al-'ilm*. However, in the present book, we avoid abstruse methods and obscure routes, for the sake of clarity and conciseness [. . .], and [we use] only three methods.

These are: (a) "Investigation and disjunction" (*al-sabr wa-al-taqṣīm*);¹⁶ (b) other syllogistic forms, which al-Ghazālī refers to

¹³ See a different approach to al-Ghazālī's statement by M. Marmura ("Ghazali's attitude to the secular sciences and logic", in G. Hourani [ed.], *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* [Albany, 1975], pp. 100–11, at pp. 103 ff.).

¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'ilm*, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1961), pp. 165ff.

¹⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Arba'īn*, p. 24; cf. *Jawāhir*, p. 21. As already hinted at, he associates *ma'rifa* with *mukāshafa*.

¹⁶ Using Joseph van Ess's translation ("The logical structure of Islamic theology", in G. Grunbaum [ed.], *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*; Giorgio Levi

simply by giving one example;¹⁷ and (c) the argument *ad hominem* (*ilzām*).¹⁸ The first and third forms of argument are among the most common in classical *kalām*, whereas the second appears as a very vague hint at Aristotelian syllogisms. Al-Ghazālī then lists the types of premises used in the *Iqtiṣād*, which correspond to earlier *kalām* classifications.¹⁹ The *Iqtiṣād*, in fact, does not contain any clear references to logic. Does the *mutakallim*, accordingly, need to know logic? The answer here is ‘no’. The curious reader is referred to the *Mihakk* and the *Mi’yār*, while normal *kalām* methods, modified slightly, are found sufficient for the *Iqtiṣād*. We, therefore, need to modify our original assumption regarding the definitiveness of al-Ghazālī’s promotion of logic in *kalām*.

The difference between his views on this issue appears due, not to incoherence, but to pragmatism. It was mentioned that the *Tahāfut* and the *Qistās* represent the negativist function that al-Ghazālī assigns to *kalām*. The *Iqtiṣād* should be recognised as representing the second function, viz. persuasion. The proofs provided in the *Iqtiṣād*, he writes, act as remedies for hearts.²⁰ They are directed primarily at intelligent men, plagued by doubts, who should be addressed by gentle argument, not severe argumentation.²¹ Some people will be persuaded (remedied) by traditional sayings, some by a simple argument, and others by the sort of theology found in the *Iqtiṣād*. Al-Ghazālī offers this last group (a manifestation, it seems, of an increasingly critical, sophisticated and eclectic age) more rigorous proofs (greater *taḥqīq*) than found in

Della Vida Conferences [Los Angeles, 1967], pp. 21–50, at p. 41). This argument involves listing all possible solutions to a given problem, and showing that some are inconceivable; if one remains, its truth will be certain (cf. al-Ghazālī, *Mi’yār*, pp. 156–8).

¹⁷ He writes: “That we combine two original views (*aṣl*) in a different way, such as to say [etc.]”.

¹⁸ Which is the dialectical strategy whereby the arguer forces his opponent to accept a conclusion that he derives from premises that the opponent accepts, but which the arguer does not necessarily accept. The conclusion will normally be unacceptable, or problematic, to the opponent. Cf. al-Ghazālī’s explanation (*al-Iqtiṣād fī al-i’tiqād*, ed. Ḥ. Atay *et al.* [Ankara, 1962], p. 17).

¹⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, pp. 20–3; cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-awā’il wa-talkhīṣ al-dalā’il*, ed. I. Haydar (Beirut, 1993), pp. 28–31. By contrast, al-Ghazālī’s classification of premises in the *Mi’yār* (pp. 186ff.) corresponds to Ibn Sīnā’s classification.

²⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, p. 9.

²¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, pp. 11–2. Compare this to his approach in his negativist *kalām* works.

classical *kalām*. More inquisitive and critical readers are referred to the *Miḥakk*, and yet more demanding ones to the *Mi'yār*. Yet, at the level of the *Iqtiṣād*, logic is unnecessary. And the value of logic appears therapeutic, rather than intrinsic. Such is al-Ghazālī's therapeutic pragmatism in his approach to *kalām*.

As for his more straightforward promotion of logic in the context of the *Tahāfut* and the *Qistās*, this too betrays pragmatism (here mainly dialectical, not therapeutic). An effective dialectical strategy may involve adopting the opponents' own tools, or ones that are arguably superior, in refuting their views.²² In this case, promoting logic in *kalām* appears partly connected to defending orthodoxy against the *falāsifa* (hence, *Mi'yār al-'ilm*), and the Ismā'īlīs (hence, *al-Qistās al-mustaqīm*).

So how should we assess al-Ghazālī's introduction of logic into *kalām*? Relevant to our present context are three accusations levelled at early *mutakallimūn* by the *falāsifa* and others. First and second, they were accused of doing little more than dialectic (*jadāl*) in two senses. One sense is "the *ilzām*²³ and silencing of the opponent, when the dialectician (*jadālī*) is the questioner and objector, and that [the dialectician] does not himself become subject to an *ilzām* by the opponent, when he is the one being questioned and who defends his view".²⁴ The second is the Peripatetic sense of relying on arguments that use admitted (*musallamāt*) and widely-accepted (*mashhūrāt*) premises,²⁵ which, thereby, fall below the standards of demonstration. The third accusation is that many of the forms of argument used by the *mutakallimūn* are flawed syllogistically and fall below the standards of philosophical demonstration; they are, therefore, non-apodictic.

Where does al-Ghazālī stand in relation to all this? First, his negativist *kalām* writings are thoroughly and admittedly dialectical in the first sense, to the extent that he even appears to have innovated a new 'type' of *kalām* that does little more than refutation. Second and third, he does not show interest, in

²² Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār*, p. 60; *Munqidh*, pp. 94–5.

²³ See n. 18 *supra*.

²⁴ Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn*, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1998), 'jadāl'; cf. al-Jurjānī, *Al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut, n.d.), 'jadāl'.

²⁵ On these premises, see: Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, ed. S. Dunya, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1960), vol. 1, p. 289 ff.

the *Iqtisād*, in downgrading, or abandoning, the use of so-called ‘admitted’ and ‘widely-accepted’ premises and of the traditional *kalām* forms of argument. Why, after all, abandon these types of evidence, if they fulfil their therapeutic function? In this respect, the *Tahāfut* has a more rigorous stance.²⁶

Subject to his primary soteriological concern, al-Ghazālī’s introduction of logic to *kalām* is by no means consistent or definitive, but pragmatic. It is not bold enough to revolutionise *kalām*; yet it paves the way for al-Rāzī’s bolder initiative. Thus, while al-Ghazālī attempts to produce a *kalām* theology that is somewhat superior to earlier *kalām*, it remains highly dialectical (in both senses of the word), and often appears even more thoroughly negativist.

The Post-Ghazālian Milieu

The influence of Ibn Sīnā, and *falsafa* in general, continued to spread in the Muslim east after al-Ghazālī, as is indicated by various sources from this period. Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631 / 1233), himself a theologian and philosopher, writes:

The fascination of the people of our time and the scholars of our age in studying the sciences of the ancients and in borrowing from old philosophers has increased, such that it led them away from studying Legal matters and religious issues. That passion may drive one of them to frequently display his recklessness, by omitting obligations and committing prohibited things, imagining that he is one of the firmly-grounded philosophers and erudite virtuous men (although he is the most ignorant of men in what he claims and the furthest among them from knowing what it involves), and fooled by the bombastic words and strange-sounding names that he hears, such as ‘hyle’, ‘element’ (*uṣṭuqus*), ‘element’ (*unṣur*), ‘matter’, ‘form’, ‘First Cause’, ‘Active Intellect’, Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Proclus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, etc.! The utmost of the most erudite among them is to have superficial knowledge of the words, instead of [knowing their] meanings.²⁷

Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (more on whom below) writes that “the books and various doctrines of the *falāsifa* have become widespread” among Muslims. He continues:

²⁶ As we will see, al-Rāzī accuses al-Ghazālī of using dialectical premises in the *Tahāfut*. This is also one of the main themes in Ibn Rushd’s *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*.

²⁷ Sayf al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Āmidī, *Daqā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq*, Princeton, Garret Collection, MS 42B, fol. 1b.

Many Muslims have become inclined to accepting their claims and to studying the deviations that they include in their books. Such belief and inclination are increasing by the day – something that threatens to result in widespread corruption in faith. [. . .] Most of those inclined to accepting their claims believe that they affirm prophecy, the afterlife, a happy [end] for the good and a miserable [end] for the bad.²⁸

He explains this inclination by several factors. Some people will study one of the philosophical sciences (*e.g.* arithmetic, geometry, or medicine), will find it rigorous and sound, and conclude that all other philosophical sciences are so. Others will deal with the discipline of disputation (*khilāf*) in the science of the principles of jurisprudence, and will hear that the *falāsifa* have their own discipline for scrutinising arguments. They will then study books on logic (which, according to Ibn Ghaylān, is a useful discipline), and come across examples from metaphysics and physics. Moreover, the *falāsifa* will often juxtapose logic with metaphysics and physics in the same works, motivating the student of logic to delve into those two disciplines.²⁹ Others will study *kalām*, and find refutations of *falsafī* views. When they learn that these are the views of earlier philosophers, which Ibn Sīnā often contradicted, and that he developed a more rigorous philosophy, they will be tempted to read his books to be able to debate with the latest developments in *falsafa*.³⁰

By the 6th / 12th century, *falsafa* had spread beyond the specialist *falsafī* circles criticised in the *Tahāfut*,³¹ to include mainstream Sunni religious scholars: both *fuqahā'* and *mutakallimūn*. It seems, in fact, that al-Ghazālī himself had a role to play in this spread, *e.g.* by adopting logic and numerous *falsafī* sciences and views, his in-depth refutation of *falsafa*, and, paradoxically, his conclusion that the *falāsifa* become unbelievers only by upholding three doctrines (the eternity of the world, the denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection), which dispelled the notion that *falsafa* as such, and as a whole, is tantamount to unbelief. It

²⁸ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, pp. 7–9 [= 335–6]; cf. p. 14 [= 344].

²⁹ The argument that logic is prohibited because it leads to *falsafa* became common. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 650 / 1251) writes in his famous *fatwā*, "Logic is the introduction to *falsafa*; and the introduction to evil is itself evil" ('Uthmān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. 'A. Qal'aji [Aleppo, 1983], p. 71).

³⁰ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, pp. 9–10 [= 337–8].

³¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, pp. 73 ff.

would have appeared, after him, that if one dealt with *falsafa*, while avoiding these views, one would more or less remain on the safe side.

Ibn Ghaylān's description of his milieu is also of interest since it shows that many students of religious sciences, who became involved in *falsafa*, suffered from considerable confusion. On one hand, they had the works of Ibn Sīnā and other *falāsifa*, which often contradicted their orthodox belief. Ibn Ghaylān, as we will see, indicates that he himself faced this problem. On the other hand, they had al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, which refuted very much the bulk of *falsafī* metaphysics. The average student of *falsafa*, in the first three quarters of the 6th / 12th century, who wanted to keep his orthodox belief, and who adopted the attitude that not all what the *falāsifa* say is false and tantamount to unbelief,³² was confronted simultaneously by Ibn Sīnā's developed system and al-Ghazālī's refutation thereof.

The only other main source available to this readership was Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's (d. 560 / 1164-5) *Mu'tabar*, which presented a serious *falsafī* alternative to, and criticism of, Ibn Sīnā. Yet, although Abū al-Barakāt's philosophy had much influence in this milieu, due to its general agreement with the orthodox creed, it had serious limitations that disallowed it from becoming an ideal alternative. Most importantly, although the *Mu'tabar* addresses topics that are of primarily religious interest, it does not address them, as Ibn Sīnā's works do, within an unambiguously Islamic context. Some even doubted whether Abū al-Barakāt's conversion to Islam from Judaism was genuine.³³

None of the three main sources for philosophising *fuqahā'* and *mutakallimūn* in this period (Ibn Sīnā's works, al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*, and Abū al-Barakāt's *Mu'tabar*) could have separately satisfied their interest. Yet, put together, they were irreconcilable. Whence the confusion in this developing eclectic milieu. We thus find 'Alī ibn Zayd al-Bayhaqī (d. 565 / 1170) starting by studying the traditional religious

³² This view is promoted by al-Ghazālī (*Munqidh*, pp. 110-4).

³³ E.g. Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ*, ed. Kh. Ahmed, 2 vols. (Haydarabad, 1976), vol. 2, p. 148. There was also, of course, al-Shahrastānī (d. 548 / 1153). Yet it seems that his criticism of *falsafa*, particularly in *Muṣāra'at al-falāsifa*, had limited impact in this century. Also, his approach in *Nihāyat al-aqdām* is akin to classical pre-Ghazālian Ash'arī *kalām*.

sciences, including classical *kalām*, then gaining interest in *falsafa*, and writing a book of *falsafī* biographies, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*, commentaries on Ibn Sīnā's *Najāt* and *Ishārāt*, and a criticism of the *Mu'tabar*, while having much praise for al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ghaylān, who deem the *falāsifa* to be unbelievers.³⁴

In this milieu, a so-far unrecognised anti-*falsafī* trend appeared, consisting of figures who embodied the Ghazālian scholarly ethos; they were practitioners of *fiqh*, *kalām*, and some philosophical sciences, including logic, and their approach to *falsafa* took its inspiration mainly from the *Tahāfut*. The two most prominent representatives of this 'Ghazālian trend' appear to be the following so-far obscure figures:

(1) The already mentioned Afḍal al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Alī ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (b. early 6th / 12th century, d. ca 590 / 1194), whom al-Rāzī calls al-Farīd al-Ghaylānī, and describes as being "very famous".³⁵ He writes that he initially studied *fiqh*, then logic, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, and continues:

These sciences motivated me to go into physics and metaphysics, since they are close to them. My heart then used to be very anxious because

³⁴ See 'Alī ibn Zayd al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma* [published as *Tārīkh ḥukamā' al-Islām*], ed. M. K. Ali (Damascus, 1946), pp. 40; 143; 157; 160; and his autobiography in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, 7 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 7, p. 228.

³⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt fī bilād mā warā' al-nahr*, in Fathallah Kholeif, *A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his Controversies in Transoxiana* (Beirut, 1966), p. 59. Ibn Ghaylān's date of birth can be estimated from his statement that he joined the Nizāmiyya school in Marw to study *fiqh* in 523 / 1129 (*Hudūth*, pp. 10–11 [= 339–40]; cf. Michot, "La pandémie avicennienne", pp. 289–92). As for Ibn Ghaylān's date of death, we know that al-Rāzī was on his first visit to Bukhara in 582 / 1186, before he went to Samarqand, where he met him. In his debates, recorded years afterwards (*Munāẓarāt*, pp. 21; 54; cf. Tony Street, "Concerning the life and works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", in P. Riddell et al. (ed.), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society; A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 135–46, at p. 142), al-Rāzī describes him in the past tense, which indicates that he is no longer alive (*Munāẓarāt*, p. 59). Also, in one of the two MSS used in the edition, he is referred to with the epithet, "May God have mercy on him". This could be part of al-Rāzī's original text, omitted by a copyist, or an addition by a copyist (see also n. 83 *infra*).

One chain suggests that Ibn Ghaylān was a student of al-Lawkarī, who studied with Bahmanyār, Ibn Sīnā's student (Muhammad Mahmud al-Khudayri, "*Silsila muttašila min talāmīdh Ibn Sīnā fī mi'atay 'ām*", in *Al-Kitāb al-dhahabī li-al-mahrajān al-alf li-dhikrā Ibn Sīnā* [Cairo, 1952], pp. 53–9). However, al-Lawkarī died too early for this to be possible, in 517 / 1123 (Ibn Ghaylān studied *fiqh* before *falsafa*). Some sources give the chain with a certain Ibn al-Jaylānī instead (Nūr Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh Shūshtarī, *Majālis al-mu'minīn* [Tehran, 1986], p. 328).

they contradicted the religious creed that I used to believe in. I realised that it was possible to refute them by the science of *kalām*; so I began to study it, with the main purpose of comprehending the fallacies underlying the erroneous contentions with which they contradict truth. In [*kalām*], I came across views of the *falāsifa* that Ibn Sīnā contradicted and refuted; thus my interest in reading his books and understanding what is in them increased, so that [my] objections to their claims and responses to their errors can be based on knowledge and understanding.³⁶

This outlook is represented in his work *Ḥudūth al-‘ālam*, a response to an epistle in which Ibn Sīnā refutes the arguments of the *mutakallimūn* against the conceivability of a pre-eternal world and for the temporal origination of the world.³⁷ While Ibn Ghaylān engages in a dialectic with Ibn Sīnā, largely to refute his “erroneous views and arguments” (*shubha*), he also attempts to argue positively for the temporality of the world, since Ibn Sīnā’s work is itself a refutation. In its style and approach, Ibn Ghaylān’s *Ḥudūth al-‘ālam* (as he himself states) is a *kalām* work, which argues with a particular opponent, by refuting his contentions and by predicting and addressing his objections. He writes that, in this book, he takes Ibn Sīnā alone, rather than the *falāsifa* as a whole, as his opponent (*khaṣm*), since his books are most influential.³⁸ Therefore, after he presents the argument – that asserting both the pre-eternity of the world and the eternity of human souls simultaneously will entail that an infinite number of souls exist³⁹ – he writes:

If it is said, “Human souls are not multiple, according to Plato; thus such an argument will not apply to him”, I will say: In this book, we only argue (*ḥājjā*) with Ibn Sīnā, Aristotle and their followers. They reject this view, and will thus have to accept that an infinite number of souls exist.⁴⁰

The influence of al-Ghazālī’s approach in the *Tahāfut*, which is *kalām* dialectic taken in its negativism to the extreme, is very apparent in Ibn Ghaylān’s work. It can also be detected in his quotations from the *Tahāfut*, his great praise for al-Ghazālī,⁴¹

³⁶ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, pp. 10–11 [= 339–40].

³⁷ See Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ḥukūma fī ḥujaj al-muthbitīn li-al-māḍī mabda’an zamāniyyan*, published in an appendix to Ibn Ghaylān’s *Ḥudūth al-‘ālam*, pp. 131–52.

³⁸ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, p. 15.

³⁹ Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, pp. 156 ff.; Michael E. Marmura, “Avicenna and the problem of the infinite number of souls”, *Mediaeval Studies*, 22 (1960): 232–9.

⁴⁰ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, p. 39.

⁴¹ Ibn Ghaylān, *Ḥudūth*, p. 9 [= 336].

and his view that practicing *kalām*, in some circumstances, is a collective obligation.⁴²

Among Ibn Ghaylān's other works, which have a similar theme, are: (a) *al-Tawḥī'a li-al-takḥṭi'a*, in refutation of Ibn Sīnā's views on questions of logic and theology,⁴³ (b) *al-Tanbīh 'alā al-ikhtilāf wa-al-tafāwut wa-al-tanāquḍ fī Kitāb al-Adwīya al-mufrada min al-Qānūn*, against Ibn Sīnā's views in a section in his medical work the *Qānūn*,⁴⁴ and (c) *al-Tanbīh 'alā tamwīhāt Kitāb al-Tanbīhāt*, a refutation of parts of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*.⁴⁵

(2) The second author is the significant, but still obscure, Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd al-Mas'ūdī (d. ca 585 / 1189–590 / 1194). Al-Rāzī, who met him and debated with him in Bukhara around 582 / 1186, describes him as “a shaykh who is famous in *falsafa* and skilfulness.”⁴⁶ He dealt with other disciplines, including *uṣūl al-fiqh*, astrology and mathematics.⁴⁷ And his philosophical learning is confirmed by the appearance of his name in an interesting philosophical chain that al-Ṣafadī (d. 764 / 1363) provides:

The shaykh and imām Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, known as Ibn al-Akfānī [d. 749 / 1348],⁴⁸ [. . .] related to me: I read the *Ishārāt* of the

⁴² Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, p. 14 [= 344].

⁴³ Preserved in: Tehran, Majlis-e Shūrā-ye Millī Library, MS 599 (see Nasrollah Pourjavadi, *Majmū'ah-ye Falsafī-e Marāghah; A Philosophical Anthology from Maragha* [Tehran, 2002], *nūzde* [p. 19]).

⁴⁴ Preserved in: Tehran, Majlis-e Shūrā-ye Millī Library, MS 1538 (see Abd al-Husayn Ha'iri, *Fihrist-e Kitābkhāne-ye Majlis-e Shūrā-ye Millī*, 4 vols. [Tehran, 1956], vol. 4, p. 267). Ibn Ghaylān concludes this work by stating that he aims to silence those who believe Ibn Sīnā is infallible.

⁴⁵ Mentioned in: Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, p. 11 [= 340].

⁴⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, p. 31 (Kholeif's translation, p. 55). It is noteworthy that al-Rāzī (*Munāẓarāt*, pp. 31; 35), Ibn Ghaylān and copyists of extant manuscripts of a work authored by al-Mas'ūdī (*Shukūk*, fol. 99b) give his title as “al-Shaykh al-Imām”, which implies that he then enjoyed fame and respect. Regarding his date of death, he is referred to using the same past tense and epithet used in relation to Ibn Ghaylān (*Munāẓarāt*, pp. 31; 39; cf. n. 35 *supra*).

⁴⁷ See al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, pp. 31–47. Al-Mas'ūdī apparently wrote a summary of al-Ghazālī's work on Shāfi'i *fiqh*, the *Wasīṭ* (Cairo, Khedawaiya Library, MS 1765; see Muḥammad al-Biblawi *et al.*, *Fihrist al-Kitābkhāne al-Khedawaiya*, 7 vols. [Cairo, 1306 A.H.], vol. 3, p. 278). And a contemporary reportedly studied *ḥadīth* with him (al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 9, 108–9). On al-Mas'ūdī as a mathematician, see Roshdi Rashed, *Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. Œuvres mathématiques* (Paris, 1986), pp. xxxii–xxxiii, n. 17.

⁴⁸ The author of the encyclopaedia *Irshād al-qāṣid* (published). On him, see Khalīl ibn Ayybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt*, ed. S. Dederling, 29 vols. (Damascus, 1959), vol. 2, pp. 25–7, who says that he studied part of the *Ishārāt* with him.

Master Abū ‘Alī ibn Sīnā with the shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Shirwānī al-Ṣūfī [d. 699 / 1300]⁴⁹ at the Sa‘īd al-Su‘adā’ *khānqāh* in Cairo, towards the end of the year [6]98[/ 1299] and the beginning of [69]9[/ 1299]. He told me: I read it, alongside its commentary with its commentator Khwājā Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī [d. 672 / 1274]. He said: I read it with the imām Athīr al-Dīn al-Mufaḍḍal al-Abharī [d. 663 / 1264]. He said: I read it with the shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī [d. 618 / 1222]. He said: I read it with the great imām Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī [d. 606 / 1210]. He said: I read it with the shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Mas‘ūdī. He said: I read it with the shaykh Abū al-Faṭḥ ‘Umar,⁵⁰ known as Ibn al-Khayyām [439 / 1048–526 / 1131].⁵¹ He said: I read it with Bahmanyār [d. 458 / 1067], the student of the Master Ibn Sīnā [d. 428 / 1037].⁵²

Al-Mas‘ūdī, too, betrays a clear Ghazālīan influence, which is why al-Ghazālī’s views were at the centre of most of his debates with al-Rāzī.⁵³ Ibn Ghaylān, who knew him personally, has much praise for him, and links his name to al-Ghazālī:

Not everyone who reads the books of the *falāsifa*, understands their arguments, and pursues their views should be suspected of having accepted them and abandoned the beliefs upon which he was raised. [. . .] Indeed, one who is able to understand their claims with ease, to contemplate them with insight, who has a prodigious nature, an aptitude to distinguishing truthful claims from errors, who is quick to recognise the fallacies and hidden inconsistencies in them, especially if he has thorough knowledge of logic, firm grounding in *kalām*, a disposition to deal with rational matters, such as *Hujjat al-Islām* Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, the most respected shaykh and imām Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Mas‘ūdī and other *kalām* specialists, who studied logic and metaphysics for the mentioned reason alone [*i.e.* refutation] – such misconceived suspicion should not be directed at them.⁵⁴

The most important book that al-Mas‘ūdī wrote on *falsafa*, to which Ibn Ghaylān refers,⁵⁵ appears to be *al-Shukūk wa-al-shubah ‘alā al-Ishārāt* (*Doubts [raised upon,] and Dubiosities [underlined in,] the Ishārāt*). As its title indicates, this book consists of a criticism of a number of points made by Ibn Sīnā

⁴⁹ See al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 2, 143.

⁵⁰ The edition has Muḥammad, rather than ‘Umar. The two words may be confused in some styles of handwriting.

⁵¹ On al-Khayyām’s life, see Roshdi Rashed and B. Vahabzadeh, *Al-Khayyām mathématicien* (Paris, 1999), Introduction.

⁵² Al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 2, 142–3.

⁵³ Al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt*, pp. 35; 40–2; 43–7.

⁵⁴ Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, pp. 11–2 [= 340–1]. Ibn Ghaylān also frequently refers to al-Mas‘ūdī’s works in his already mentioned *Tawṭī‘a* (Pourjavady, *Majmū‘a, nūzde* [p. 19]).

⁵⁵ Ibn Ghaylān, *Hudūth*, pp. 111; 114. A critical edition of al-Mas‘ūdī’s book is ready, and I intend to publish it soon.

in the physical and metaphysical sections of the *Ishārāt*. In the first instance, the Ghazālian influence is evident, not only in this critical theme, but also in al-Mas'ūdī's references to the *Tahāfut*, such as the following with which the book is concluded. He refers to Ibn Sīnā's contentions that the First Cause knows Itself and other existents, and that It does not know particulars, and writes:

On each of these [contentions], serious doubts and objections can be raised. These have been presented by the felicitous Imām al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut* in such a way that cannot be enhanced; and there will be no benefit in reproducing them.⁵⁶

A number of sections in the *Shukūk* only refute Ibn Sīnā's arguments and / or conclusions, without providing alternatives. For example, to his argument – that a cause that is singular in all respects will produce only one effect – al-Mas'ūdī responds that it is conceivable for such a cause to produce only one entity, or multiple entities of one species, and that Ibn Sīnā does not provide a proof for the former.⁵⁷ Al-Mas'ūdī also provides an argument *ad hominem* against Ibn Sīnā's argument – that since the potential for destruction can only be found in matter, non-material entities, including the human soul, are indestructible. He argues that since the potential for the existentionation of the human soul appears in the human body, it follows that the potential for its destruction may also appear in the human body.⁵⁸ He then addresses a possible reply to this objection.

The *Shukūk*, however, does not merely replicate the style of the *Tahāfut*, especially that it has another main inspiration, the *Mu'tabar* of Abū al-Barakāt, which is the only other work that al-Mas'ūdī here cites.⁵⁹ In a number of sections, al-Mas'ūdī is not content with refutation, but attempts to offer alternative

⁵⁶ Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Shukūk wa-al-shubah 'alā al-Ishārāt*, Istanbul, Hamidiye Library, MS 1452, fols. 109b–150a, at fol. 149b; cf. 137b; 144a.

⁵⁷ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fols. 144b–146a.

⁵⁸ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fols. 148b–149a.

⁵⁹ Al-Mas'ūdī writes: “The division of perceivers into physical ones that perceive sensory objects only and non-physical ones that perceive intelligibles only is a commonly accepted view that the majority adhere to. None has contradicted them except the most excellent of the people of our time, upon whom God bestowed superior speculative [skills], the author of the *Mu'tabar*, may God grant him much reward for his efforts” (al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fol. 117b; cf. 118b; 122b). The *Shukūk* was thus written during the lifetime of Abū al-Barakāt (d. 560 / 1164–5).

conclusions to, or arguments for, Ibn Sīnā's conclusions, sometimes introducing his positive views by the statement, "As for what has been reached through research (*baḥṭh*) and rational reflection (*naẓar*) [. . .]".⁶⁰ For example, he rejects Ibn Sīnā's view that the combination of the humours is effected and preserved by the rational soul, and argues instead that the vegetative soul fulfils these functions.⁶¹ He also rejects his proof for the existence of prime matter, without rejecting the conclusion, for which he presents an alternative proof.⁶²

Notwithstanding these features and the influence of Abū al-Barakāt, the *Shukūk* still belongs to the genre of the *Tahāfut*, given its overall negativist theme and character, appreciated thoroughly by Ibn Ghaylān. It appears to represent a distinct nuance of the Ghazālīan anti-*falsafī* trend, that is more eclectic and more involved in *falsafa* than the criticisms of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ghaylān. Unlike them, al-Mas'ūdī does not direct accusations of unbelief towards Ibn Sīnā, whom he refers to as "the Shaykh, may God have mercy on him".

The *Shukūk* in particular, and perhaps the new general approach that it represents, seem to be a major inspiration for al-Rāzī's later approach – which I hope to show in detail when the book is published. Most immediately, al-Rāzī wrote a response to this book, which lies at the background of his and al-Ṭūsī's commentaries on the *Ishārāt*.⁶³ The *Shukūk* formed a crucial part of the maturing dialectic between the philosophical tradition and its Sunni theological critics, rather than part of the next dialectical phase that was looming. In a situation where the same people were interested in both *falsafa* and orthodox theology, what was most needed was an Islamic *falsafa*, not variations of anti-*falsafī* dialectical *kalām*. The breakthrough was to be presented by al-Rāzī.

In addition to Ibn Ghaylān and al-Mas'ūdī, various scattered evidence from this poorly-documented milieu can be found, from which can be concluded: (a) an increasing interaction between *kalām* and *falsafa* during this century, (b) the

⁶⁰ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fols. 110b; 116a; 129a–b.

⁶¹ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fols. 112b–114b.

⁶² Al-Mas'ūdī, *Shukūk*, fols. 109b–111a.

⁶³ Al-Rāzī's response is mentioned by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, 3 vols., printed with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* (Cairo, 1325 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 29; 1, 128; 1, 137. A critical edition of al-Rāzī's work will be published with al-Mas'ūdī's work (n. 55 *supra*).

existence of this Ghazālian trend,⁶⁴ and (c) a direct contact between this trend and al-Rāzī. Some names present themselves, such as one of the main teachers of al-Rāzī and al-Suhrawardī in *kalām* and *falsafa*, viz. Majd al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Jīlī (d. ?), of whom we know only that that he lived in Rayy, then moved to Marāgha, and that he studied with Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Naysābūrī (d. 548 / 1153), al-Ghazālī’s student.⁶⁵ Little is also known about ‘Umar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī, another significant figure in this milieu. A fuller picture may be drawn once extant manuscripts of more works from this period are unearthed.

We should now turn to the link between the Ghazālian trend and al-Rāzī, best illuminated in his well-known collection of debates, the *Munāẓarāt*. These debates fall mainly under two categories. Some (of no interest to us here) are with Ḥanafīs and Māturīdīs on juristic and theological topics. Other debates are with Ghazālians – al-Mas‘ūdī and members of his circle in Bukhara, and Ibn Ghaylān in Samarqand.⁶⁶ It is noteworthy that, alongside these Ghazālians and their disciples, 4 in number, al-Rāzī only mentions one other debater by name (al-Nūr al-Ṣābūnī, a well-known Māturīdī) – which suggests that he was particularly interested in this group.

Worthy of mention also is that al-Rāzī, in much of the *Munāẓarāt*, appears very keen on criticising al-Ghazālī. For instance, at one point, he says to al-Mas‘ūdī:

I was in Ṭūs once, and they put me in al-Ghazālī’s cell, and gathered round me. I said to the people there, “You have wasted your lives in reading the *Mustasfā*! I will give anyone, who is able to relate a proof from among those, which al-Ghazālī cites from the beginning of the *Mustasfā* to the end, and sets it out as it is written, without adding another word, one hundred dīnārs!”⁶⁷

He frequently states that a given view expressed by al-Ghazālī is “nothing of value”, or “extremely weak”.⁶⁸ Much of the book

⁶⁴ Note, e.g., Ibn Ghaylān’s reference to al-Ghazālī, al-Mas‘ūdī and “other *kalām* specialists, who studied logic and metaphysics for” the sole purpose of refuting *falsafa*, in contrast to the usual students of *falsafa* (p. 154 *supra*).

⁶⁵ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-anbā’ abnā’ al-zamān*, ed. M. Abd al-Hamid, 6 vols. (Cairo, 1948), vol. 4, p. 250. An epistle he wrote on logic, *al-Lāmi’*, was published recently (Pourjavadi, *Majmū’a*, pp. 345–64).

⁶⁶ Debates 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 16.

⁶⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, p. 45 (Kholeif’s translation, pp. 67–8, with adjustments).

⁶⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, pp. 35; 41; 42; 45.

appears as a criticism, not only of aspects of al-Ghazālī's intellectual legacy, but equally of those Ghazālīans, with some debates dedicated to criticising certain books: the *Tahāfut* in debate 9, some heresiographies, especially one by al-Ghazālī against Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ the Ismā'īlī in debate 10, and al-Ghazālī's juristic *Mustasfā* and *Shifā' al-'alīl* in debate 11.

Yet the problem is not personal (at least not primarily).⁶⁹ Indeed, it will appear that some of the key tensions in that chapter of the historical dialectic in Islamic thought are, as it were, acted out in actual debates, a crucial recurrent theme in them being the dichotomy of dialectic (*jadāl*) and proper intellectual enquiry (*baḥṭh*). This is clear from two debates in particular.

In one debate, al-Rāzī first claims that astrology (one of al-Mas'ūdī's specialisations) is an ill-founded science. He writes:

When al-Mas'ūdī heard these words, he was outraged and said, "Why do you say that astrology is an ill-founded science? And where is the proof?" I said that it was proved in two ways. In the first place, citation from the great philosophers, the chief of whom is Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. When the shaykh Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā praised him, he said that he was greater than almost all his predecessors.⁷⁰ He composed a famous work to demonstrate the falsity of astrology. The shaykh Abū Sahl al-Masīḥī was also among the most learned people, and he composed a book to demonstrate its falsity. The shaykh Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā wrote a long chapter to set out the falsity of astrology in the *Shifā'* and the *Najāt*. Those are the most eminent philosophers and the most excellent scholars, and they all agree in censuring this art! The people of our own time, even if they have achieved a high status, are, in comparison to them, as a drop is to the ocean, and as a torch is to the moon!⁷¹

Al-Rāzī, a very critical thinker, cannot be serious about such otherwise naïve rhetoric. He rather appears to be provoking al-Mas'ūdī, as if saying, "Don't imagine that being one of the most famous specialists in these disciplines nowadays qualifies you to criticising those great philosophers!" We are told that al-Mas'ūdī consequently got extremely angry. Al-Rāzī then

⁶⁹ E.g. Paul Kraus writes of the *Munāẓarāt* that "the most astonishing fact [. . .] is the violent diatribe of Rāzī against Ghazālī. [. . .] Such an attitude as this, undoubtedly inspired by young Rāzī's jealousy of Ghazālī, is not seen in any other work of his." ("The 'Controversies' of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", *Islamic Culture*, 12 (1938): 131–50, p. 150; cf. van Ess, "Logical structure", p. 31).

⁷⁰ Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, ed. M. Bidarfar (Qom, 1413 A.H.), p. 375.

⁷¹ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, pp. 32–3 (Kholeif's translation, p. 56, with adjustments).

portrays his debater refuting him on the basis of gross misinterpretations of his statements, against which he protests, saying: “When did you hear me say [so-and-so]? [. . .] Would that I had not come to Transoxiana so that I should not have heard such bizarre statements!”

Al-Raḍī al-Naysābūrī (d. 617 / 1221), a prominent student of al-Mas‘ūdī, who was present, then cites an argument *ad hominem*, from the *Tahāfut*, against the *falsafī* notion of the nature of celestial spheres.⁷² But al-Rāzī proceeds to show that this objection is invalid, since it relies on an unproven premise. Al-Mas‘ūdī, reportedly fuming with anger, retorts:

“What you say is purely dialectical; but intelligent men do not consider rejecting a purely rational problem with pure dialectic admissible.”

I [*i.e.* al-Rāzī] said, “I pray Almighty God, the Compassionate, to protect my mind and soul from this crooked philosophy (*ḥikma mu‘awajja*)! For the *ḥaylasūf* [viz. Ibn Sīnā] provided a proof in relation to the problem that he posed; then the objector [viz. al-Ghazālī] advanced a *reductio ad absurdum* (*mu‘āraḍa*) against it. This *reductio ad absurdum* becomes complete only when the objector shows that all [the elements of the original argument] are accounted for in this objection. Otherwise, if he is unable to do so, this *reductio ad absurdum* becomes unsound and negligible talk worthy of no attention.⁷³

Al-Mas‘ūdī changes his line of argument, and says: “All [sorts of] motion are equal qua motion; therefore, since a body could possess (*qābil*) a particular type of motion, it must possess all [types of] motion.” Both this argument and al-Ghazālī’s argument that al-Rāzī criticises initially, rest on the dialectical premise, widely-used by the *mutakallimūn*, that, in a given situation, if no particular quantity of something is more likely than another, one must either affirm an infinite number of quantities, or negate all quantities of that thing.⁷⁴ Al-Rāzī replies, “If a *mutakallim* gives such an argument, various types of dubiousities will arise for him; so how [do you allow yourself to do so] when you are a philosopher!”⁷⁵ He then shows that “al-Ghazālī is the one who needs to establish a proof for” the premise on which his refutation relies, while “it suffices the *ḥaylasūf* to demand [al-Ghazālī] to present that proof”.⁷⁶ By this, al-Rāzī shows that it is in fact al-Ghazālī who is the

⁷² Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, pp. 105 ff.

⁷³ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, pp. 36–7.

⁷⁴ We return to this premise briefly below, p. 168.

⁷⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, p. 37.

⁷⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, p. 38.

dialectician, while he himself only aims to expose errors in al-Ghazālī's dialectic. Hence al-Mas'ūdī's prior accusation, that al-Rāzī is a mere dialectician, backfires (which appears to be why al-Rāzī mentions the accusation in the story).

Despite its lighter side, the account of the debate, particularly the manner in which al-Mas'ūdī's stance is portrayed, is instructive (regardless of its accuracy). He is shown to be critical of views that he does not fully comprehend, to derive from them invalid implications, to rely on unfounded, but sometimes widely-accepted, dialectical premises and negativist forms of argument, and to be irascibly motivated by the defence of a person or a doctrine, rather than by a detached search for truth. As we will see, al-Rāzī considers these to be vices of the *mutakallimūn*, especially those with the Ghazālian leaning. Their anti-*falsafī* approach proves dialectical, and falls below the standards of proper intellectual inquiry (*baḥṭh*).

The second relevant debate is with Ibn Ghaylān. Al-Rāzī writes:

I had heard that people read my books, such as the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, and *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* with him. I heard also that he had written a book on the temporal origination of the world.⁷⁷ When we engaged in discussion, I said to him, "I hear that you have written a book on the temporal origination of bodies."

He said, "Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā has written a treatise replying to the arguments cited to refute [the notion of] a pre-eternal chain of events. I replied to that treatise, and proved that his argumentation (*kalām*) is weak."

I said, "Good heavens! The notion that bodies are pre-eternal can be taken in two ways. First, one can say that a body was moving in pre-eternity, which is the view of Aristotle and his followers. Second, one can say that the body was initially at rest in pre-eternity, then it moved. Suppose you refuted the first interpretation, as is the view of Aristotle and Abū 'Alī, this refutation alone would not prove that the body is temporal. So, what is the proof that the second interpretation is invalid [. . .]?"

Al-Farīd al-Ghaylānī said, "I dispute this problem with (*atakallamu fī . . . ma'a . . .*) none but Abū 'Alī. When I refuted his doctrine of eternal motion, this was sufficient for me to prove the temporal production of bodies."

I said, "If Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī were to come to you and say, 'Be my witness that I do not believe that bodies were moving in

⁷⁷ Al-Rāzī, therefore, had not read the book then, and his objections appear to be based on his view of the general approach adopted by Ibn Ghaylān.

pre-eternity, but that they were at rest and then began to move in pre-eternity! how would you refute his opinion [. . .]?”

Al-Ghaylānī insisted on his statement, “I do not commit myself to proving the temporal origination of bodies, but I commit myself to refuting the opinion of Abū ‘Alī.”

I said, “In this case, this will not be intellectual, scientific inquiry (*baḥth*), but a kind of disputation (*mujādala*) with a particular person on a particular point.” Then I said, “Suppose we content ourselves with this much; tell me the proof of the falsity of the notion of a pre-eternal chain of events”.⁷⁸

Ibn Ghaylān then argues that had there been an infinite number of events in the past, “something infinite” (*mā lā nihāyata lahu*) would have “come into being”; yet the coming of something infinite into being is inconceivable. Al-Rāzī retorts by showing that the latter, ambiguous premise either means the same as the conclusion, making the argument circular, or is meaningless and reliant on wordplay.

The crucial point of contention here is as follows. Ibn Ghaylān argues, as he also does in his book,⁷⁹ that he authored that book as a response (*jawāb*) to Ibn Sīnā’s argumentation (*kalām*) in relation to a particular topic. He does not show interest in arguing (*yatakallam*) with anyone else in that regard. As such, he is an ideal Ghazālian *mutakallim*, whose primary task is to battle against particular views until their erroneous natures are exposed. According to al-Rāzī, he is, by this, a mere dialectician, a pseudo-theologian, whose poor methods will not reach him to real knowledge.⁸⁰ The accounts of both debates mark a crucial aspect of al-Rāzī’s departure from previous *kalām*, namely his rejection of its thorough dialecticism, be it intentional, as in Ghazālian *kalām*, or presumed, mistakenly, to be proper critical intellectual enquiry (*baḥth*), as in classical *kalām*.

A brief description of a debate that al-Rāzī had in Bukhara with an unnamed critic of Ibn Sīnā’s *Ishārāt* can also be

⁷⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Munāẓarāt*, pp. 60–1 (much use was made of Kholeif’s translation, pp. 82–3).

⁷⁹ See p. 152 *supra*.

⁸⁰ Van Ess (“Logical structure”, p. 25, n. 20) comments on this debate: “We may assume that Rāzī did not really want to support Ibn Sīnā in [his view of the pre-eternity of the world]; but his craving for intellectual superiority and a momentary ill humor made him reject those counterarguments as too naïve although they supported his line of thinking. Unfortunately – and this is once more typical of the style of *kalām* – Rāzī does not deem it necessary to give his own solution of the problem”. It should be clear by now that this traditional reading of the *Munāẓarāt* greatly trivialises al-Rāzī’s position.

found recorded by the geographer Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī (d. 682 / 1283). Al-Rāzī addresses the critic's objections individually and shows him that they rely on misinterpretations of Ibn Sīnā's statements.⁸¹ It is not clear whether this critic is al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn Ghaylān, or someone else.

In addition to the *Munāẓarāt* and his response to al-Mas'ūdī's *Shukūk*, al-Rāzī's dialectical involvement with those Ghazālīans is indicated by an epistle entitled *Jawāb al-Ghaylānī*,⁸² apparently in response to something written by Ibn Ghaylān – and it is instructive that al-Rāzī rarely writes works dedicated to addressing the views of particular individuals (with the exception of Ibn Sīnā). Although, on the whole, al-Ghazālī and Ghazālīans are rarely referred to by name in his theological and philosophical works,⁸³ especially in comparison with his references to other Muslim intellectuals, their significance as part of his intellectual background cannot be underestimated.⁸⁴ Also, as mentioned, al-Mas'ūdī's synthesis between the approaches of al-Ghazālī and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī appears to have had a positive influence on al-Rāzī, leading to his definitive synthesis between *falsafa* and *kalām*.

Having defined the main dialectical outlines in al-Rāzī's milieu, we should now explore the main developments, in terms of objective, method and substance, that he introduced into Islamic theology. The relevance of these developments to this milieu will become apparent.

⁸¹ Zakariyyā ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-'ibād*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), pp. 252–3.

⁸² Mentioned by Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qiftī, *Ikhbār al-'ulamā' bi-akhbār al-ḥukamā'*, ed. M. al-Khānjī (Cairo, 1326 A.H.), p. 191.

⁸³ Al-Rāzī mentions Ibn Ghaylān in *Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-al-muta'akhhirīn*, ed. H. Atay (Cairo, 1991), p. 228 (see editorial note 5). In some MSS, Ibn Ghaylān's name is followed by "may God preserve him", indicating that the book was written in his lifetime. Other MSS have various phrases indicating his death, later modifications by either al-Rāzī, in his revision of this work, or copyists.

⁸⁴ He clearly deemed this group as intellectually inferior contemporaries, deserving only of being caricatured in the *Munāẓarāt*. Nevertheless, it seems that when al-Rāzī refers to specific arguments that the *mutakallimūn* level at the *falāsifa*, he has al-Ghazālī and Ghazālīans in mind, either solely, or alongside previous *mutakallimūn*.

DEVELOPMENTS IN AL-RĀZĪ'S THOUGHT

Kalām and Logic

Al-Rāzī is proverbial in the wide variety of disciplines he delved into, especially 'rational' ones.⁸⁵ He writes, "Know that I was a lover of knowledge, and I wrote something about everything, without restriction in either quantity or quality";⁸⁶ and, "I only intended to increase research and sharpen the mind".⁸⁷ While his main interests were *kalām* and *falsafa*, he wrote influential works on Qur'ānic exegesis, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, medicine and the occult.

As a theologian, he started as a purely classical Ash'arī *mutakallim*, as is clear from the substance and approach of one of the earliest books he authored, the *Ishāra*. He appears to follow the footsteps of his first teacher, his father, who was a committed Ash'arī, and whom he frequently cites, calling him "the felicitous imām".⁸⁸ He refers to al-Ash'arī as "our shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan, may God be pleased with him".⁸⁹ It is also related that he memorised al-Juwaynī's lengthy *kalām* work, the *Shāmīl*.⁹⁰

Al-Rāzī's interests then became more varied, and his theology more sophisticated, as is clear from his work *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, which contains more in-depth discussions of *falsafa*. He tells us, in an undated work, of this early transitory stage in his career:

At the beginning of our study of *kalām*, we became interested in familiarising ourselves with the works of [the *falāsifa*], so as to refute them. We spent a good part of our life in that [study], until God guided us to author books that contain refutations of them, such as *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ*, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* [and others]. All these books include [a] expositions of the fundamentals of religion, and [b] refutation of the fallacies of the *falāsifa* and other

⁸⁵ Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1913), vol. 1, p. 454.

⁸⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Waṣīyya* (Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 467).

⁸⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Waṣīyya* (Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 468). T. Street's translation, "Life and works", p. 137.

⁸⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Ishāra fī 'ilm al-kalām*, Istanbul, Köprülü Library, MS 519(2), fols. 48b; 59b. On Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Ash'arī affiliation, see al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3, 159ff.; 7, 242; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4, 252; al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 32 vols. (Beirut, 1992), 1, 90; 13, 35; 13, 165; 20, 117.

⁸⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Ishāra*, fols. 3b; 36b; 62a.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 4, 249.

opponents. Both supporters and opponents agree that no one among ancient or late authors wrote comparable works.⁹¹

The statement appears in the context of his defence against those who accuse him of departing from orthodox Sunni theology. As we will see, his description of the purpose of authoring these works is not entirely accurate in the case of the last three works, but accurate with respect to the *Nihāya*, in which he clearly aims to refute *falsafa* in defence of the Sunni creed. He writes in its introduction:

I included in it [discussions of] scientific and subtle matters that can hardly be found in any of the books of ancient or later authors of both supporters and opponents. My book is distinct from other books written in this subject in three ways:

First, the pursuit of questions and answers, and the deep delve into the oceans of problems, such that the benefit that the follower of each creed gains from this book of mine may be greater than the benefit he gains from the books authored by supporters of that creed itself. For I select from each discussion its cream, and from each investigation its best part. When I can no longer find any discussion that is of any value, or any view that is worthy of attention, in supporting their creed and proving their claims, I myself produce the utmost that can be put forth in proving that creed and completing the investigation (*tahrīr*) of that topic. However, at the end, I will refute each view, except what is upheld by the followers of the sunna, and I will show, with strong proofs, that one ought to adhere to it.

Second, producing [...] demonstrations (*burhān*) that lead to true knowledge and complete certainty, rather than arguments *ad hominem* (*ilzām*), of which the whole purpose is to refute and defeat [the opponent].

Third, our novel approach [...] that requires he who commits himself to it to address all possible objections and doubts, and to avoid superfluity and prolixity.⁹²

The book has the standard classical *kalām* objective of proving the religious creed of the author and refuting the views of opponents. Therefore, its table of contents has the general layout of a standard work on the principles of religion. Yet, significantly, its method is not a standard *kalām* method, since al-Rāzī decides to rely, not on dialectical arguments, most notably the argument *ad hominem* – central to classical and Ghazālian *kalām* – but on demonstrations.

⁹¹ Al-Rāzī, *I'tiqādāt firaq al-Muslimīn wa-al-mushrikīn*, ed. Ṭ. Sa'd *et al.* (Cairo, 1978), p. 146.

⁹² Al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, Istanbul, Ahmet III Library, MS 1874, fols. 1b–2a.

He further elucidates his methods in the methodological section, “On Types of Evidence”, in the beginning of the *Nihāya*. He first states that a rational proof requires two premises combined in a valid syllogistic form to produce a true conclusion, and then briefly lists standard Aristotelian syllogistic forms.⁹³ He then dedicates a section to criticising the “weak methods” of the *mutakallimūn*, “which do not lead to certainty”. The following methods are discussed:

(1) The argument *ad ignorantiam*. He writes:

Whenever they attempt to negate something that is not known immediately (*bi-al-ḍarūra*), they say: “There is no proof for it; and all that has no proof should be negated.” As for its having no proof, they show this by recounting the proofs given by its supporters, and then showing their fallacy.⁹⁴

In support of this type of argument, they argue, *e.g.*, that affirming a statement that has no proof allows one to affirm an infinite number of statements without proof. Al-Rāzī argues at length against this form of inference, contending, *e.g.* that lacking proof for something does not entail the inconceivability of there being proof; indeed one may discover a rational or scriptural proof in the future. He argues: “There is no difference rationally between inferring negation through the lack of evidence for affirmation and inferring affirmation through the lack of evidence for negation – which is absurd.”

(2) Al-Rāzī considers analogical proofs (*qiyās*) to be weak in the theological context, in which one is required to arrive at certainty, in contrast to *fiqh*, in which presumption is usually satisfactory. He writes:

Qiyās consists of four elements: the original case (*aṣl*), the secondary case (*farʿ*), the qualification (*ḥukm*) and the reason (*illa*). When we find that the qualification, in the case on which there is agreement, is due to a particular reason, and then find that same reason in an unresolved case, one will have to affirm the qualification in relation to it, and to ‘judge the unobservable in accordance with the observable’ (*radd al-ghāʾib ilā al-shāhid*).⁹⁵

The problem lies in showing that the qualification in the original case is due to the reason found in both cases. According to al-Rāzī, there are two ways to do so.

⁹³ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fols. 5b–6a; cf. ‘Aḍud al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, ed. M. al-Ḥalabī, 8 vols. (Cairo, 1325 A.H.), vol. 2, pp. 17 ff.

⁹⁴ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fol. 6a. Ibn Khaldūn attributes this view to al-Bāqillānī (*Al-Muqaddima* [Beirut, n.d.], p. 388).

⁹⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fol. 7b.

(a) “Coextensiveness and coexclusiveness” (*al-ṭard wa-al-‘aks*),⁹⁶ or ‘concomitance’ (*dawarān*), which means that whenever the ‘*illa* exists, the qualification will exist or apply, and whenever the ‘*illa* does not exist, the qualification will not exist or apply.⁹⁷ Al-Rāzī writes:

An example is what the Mu‘tazila say: “Inflicting harm without prior wrongdoing or subsequent compensation is bad in the observable [*i.e.* the human realm]. We then contemplate and find that whenever the act occurs and has such aspects it will be bad, and whenever it lacks any of these aspects it will not be bad. Since badness is concomitant with these considerations, in both existence and non-existence, we realise that the badness of wrongdoing is due to these considerations. Therefore, if a comparable act is performed by God, exalted, it will have to be judged bad, since it possesses the ‘*illa* of badness.”

Al-Rāzī rejects this form of inference, arguing that this concomitance does not necessarily indicate a causal link.

(b) ‘Investigation and disjunction’ (*al-sabr wa-al-taqṣīm*).⁹⁸ One may argue: “The colour black is visible because it exists. God exists. Therefore, He is visible.” One then proves the first statement by setting a disjunction (“The cause for the visibility of the colour black is its being black, or a colour, or an accident, or temporally originated, or existent”), and then investigating each possibility in turn, showing the inconceivability of all but the last, which is, consequently, concluded to be correct.⁹⁹ Al-Rāzī argues:

This method is based on [the view] that what has no proof should be negated. For if it is said, “Why can the ‘*illa* not be something other than what you have listed?” they will then say, “There is no evidence for there being another possibility; so it should be rejected.” We have already discussed this.¹⁰⁰

(3) Another method is the argument *ad hominem* (*ilzām*), which, according to al-Rāzī, is a type of *qiyās* that can have two forms. (a) The analogy of coexclusiveness (*qiyās al-‘aks*), in which the original case is positive and the secondary case negative, or vice versa. One example is:

⁹⁶ Using the translation given by van Ess (“Logical structure”, p. 39). On this method, see ‘Ali Sami al-Nashshar, *Manāhij al-baḥṭh ‘inda mufakkirī al-Islām* (Beirut, 1984), pp. 125–6.

⁹⁷ Cf. al-Jurjānī, *Ta’rīfāt*, ‘*al-ṭard wa-al-‘aks*’; van Ess, “Logical structure”, p. 39.

⁹⁸ See n. 16 *supra*.

⁹⁹ Cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fol. 8b.

[. . .] the Ash‘arī inference, in relation to the question of the creation of human acts, by arguing that had the servant been capable of existentiating (*tjād*), he would have been capable of re-existentiating (*i‘āda*), according to *qiyās* in relation to God, exalted. For, since He, exalted, is capable of existentiating, He is capable of [such] re-existentiating. But since the servant is incapable of re-existentiating, he will be incapable of existentiating.¹⁰¹

(b) The analogy of coextensiveness (*qiyās al-ṭard*), in which both the original and secondary cases are positive (e.g. the Ashā‘ira argue: We all accept that God wills by a will, so we should all accept that He knows by a knowledge), or negative (e.g. the Ashā‘ira argue: We all accept that remembering a line of reasoning (*naẓar*) does not cause (*wallada*) knowledge, so we should all accept that reasoning itself does not cause knowledge).¹⁰² Al-Rāzī considers that both types of the argument *ad hominem* lead to neither certitude nor proper refutation of the opponent, who may argue that the qualification in the original case is in fact due to a ‘*illa* that does not exist in the secondary case.

(4) According to al-Rāzī, in *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, the *mutakal-limūn* rely on scriptural evidence unsystematically and often in places where that is inadmissible. He distinguishes between three types of theological questions:

(a) Knowing the truth of some is prerequisite to knowing the truth of Revelation; e.g. the existence of the Creator, His being a voluntary agent, His knowing all things and the truthfulness of the messenger. These cannot be proved on the authority of revealed evidence.

(b) Some things can be known by revealed evidence alone, such as things that we know to be possible in themselves, while having no evidence for the existence or non-existence thereof.

(c) Some things may be known by either Revelation or unaided reason, and are not prerequisite for knowing the truthfulness of Revelation; e.g. God’s visibility, His oneness and some of His attributes. Now, al-Rāzī holds that if one finds a rational proof for something that contrasts with the literal, or ‘apparent’, (*ẓāhir*) meaning of a particular revealed statement, the latter should be interpreted metaphorically (*ta’wīl*). Otherwise, it may be understood literally. His discussion of this issue

¹⁰¹ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fol. 8b. See the argument in: ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. A. Tamīm (Beirut, 1996), pp. 177–8.

¹⁰² Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fols. 8b–9a.

is long and deserves a separate treatment.¹⁰³ But, in short, it is clear that al-Rāzī gives precedence, in theology, to rational evidence over revealed evidence. Thus, in his discussions of theological questions of types *a* and *c*, he will provide revealed evidence whenever that accords with rational evidence, merely as persuasive evidence that supports a demonstrative proof.

In addition to these four ‘weak’ forms of evidence, al-Rāzī mentions “two premises, widely-accepted among the *mutakallimūn*, on which they rely in addressing many an important question.” First, “when they want to negate a finite quantity [lit. number, ‘*adad*], or to affirm an infinite quantity, they will say: No quantity is more likely (*awlā*) than another quantity; therefore, one must either affirm an infinite number of quantities, or negate all quantities”.¹⁰⁴ Second, “their deducing the absolute similarity of two things from their similarity in some respects”. He provides many examples for both premises, and rejects both as too weak, *i.e.* non-demonstrative.¹⁰⁵

In *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*, therefore, and following his initial, typical Ash‘arī stage, al-Rāzī departs from the methods of inference that remained the mainstay of *kalām* up until his time. The *Nihāya*, he states, is distinct from *all* previous works of *kalām* in this. Although some previous *mutakallimūn* did consider some of these methods weak, al-Rāzī is the first to downgrade them wholly, explicitly and systematically in *kalām*, and to replace them definitively with Aristotelian logic, which he began to consider as the standard for certitude. He, rather than al-Ghazālī, is responsible for the spread of logic in later *kalām*. The logical part of al-Ījī’s *Mawāqif* is, thus, derived directly from the corresponding section in *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl*.¹⁰⁶

Yet al-Rāzī’s fame as a dialectician (not in the Peripatetic sense) is not without justification, as can be seen from his novel method, which, al-Ṣafadī writes, was unprecedented.¹⁰⁷ Certainty, according to him, depends on the combination of both a positive proof for a given position, with proofs for the

¹⁰³ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fols. 9b–10b.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. al-Rāzī’s debate with al-Mas‘ūdī on al-Ghazālī’s argument (p. 159 *supra*).

¹⁰⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fols. 10b–11b.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, 2, 17 ff. Al-Jurjānī even comments that some confusions in this part of the *Mawāqif* are due to misunderstanding the *Nihāya* (*Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, [printed in the margin of al-Ījī’s *Mawāqif*], 2, 35–6).

¹⁰⁷ Al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 4, 249.

inconceivability of all other conflicting positions. He writes: "Complete certainty occurs only when all objections and fallacies are encompassed and addressed".¹⁰⁸ Therefore, generally, when he begins to discuss a problem, al-Rāzī will attempt to provide an exhaustive disjunction (*taqsīm*) of all possible solutions and all possible variants of each, be they obsolete, and regardless of whether anyone ever accepted them. As he states in the *Nihāya*,¹⁰⁹ he will then list the arguments given for each position, usually supports them with arguments of his own, then does the same with arguments against each position, and continues to examine possible counterarguments and replies, until he is satisfied to have exhausted all possible arguments for and against all possible positions. By this, he hopes to arrive at his own positive conclusion, having supported it with proofs, addressed all objections to it and refuted all conflicting positions. This method appears to combine the Aristotelian theory of demonstration with the 'investigation and disjunction' orientation of classical *kalām*.

Having examined all relevant demonstrations, he will often try to present as much weaker evidence as possible, including rhetorical, dialectical and scriptural arguments. If he had already arrived at a certain conclusion, these persuasive (*iqnā'ī*) arguments may serve to confirm it. But if no certain conclusions have been reached, it may become vital to collect as much of this evidence as possible to arrive at a strong presumption, perhaps leading to a conviction that may come close to certainty.¹¹⁰

Al-Rāzī's exhaustive approach manifested in the great prolixity of some of his discussions, and resulted in some later accusations that he wastes his efforts in discussing opinions (*al-qīl wa-al-qāl*), and that he shows more interest in explicating opponents' positions than in discussing or defending the orthodox position.¹¹¹ One can also imagine how it may have appeared that some topics in *kalām* reached a level of dialectical saturation with him.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fol. 20a; cf. fol. 202b.

¹⁰⁹ See p. 164 *supra*.

¹¹⁰ On this, see al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib al-'āliya min al-'ilm al-ilāhī*, ed. A. al-Saqqā, 9 vols. (Beirut, 1987), vol. 1, p. 239.

¹¹¹ E.g. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 6 vols. (Haydarabad, 1330 A.H.), vol. 4, p. 427; Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā'il Abū Shāma, *Al-Dhayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn*, ed. M. al-Kawthari (Cairo, 1947), p. 68; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 4, 251-2.

Kalām and Falsafa

Despite this crucial change in methodology, al-Rāzī's purpose in *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, as he himself states explicitly in its introduction, remains the same primary purpose of many previous *mutakallimūn*, namely providing rational support to religious creed and refuting conflicting positions. In later works, however, al-Rāzī abandons such an explicitly apologetic objective, as he begins to view speculation as a means primarily to attaining metaphysical knowledge, rather than to defending the orthodox creed.¹¹² This transition towards a more *falsafī* approach to metaphysical inquiry is noted by Ibn Khaldūn.¹¹³

In the introduction of the *Mabāḥith*, and after he briefly describes his thorough, critical approach, he severely criticises both those who insist on following previous *falāsifa* blindly in whatever they say,¹¹⁴ and “those who dedicate themselves to refuting chief scholars and great *falāsifa* in every[thing],” believing that they have reached a rank comparable to theirs and become some of them, when, in fact, they only manage to demonstrate their stupidity!¹¹⁵ Al-Rāzī writes that he himself adopts a middle position and selects the positive aspects of each side, declaring his purpose to be the explication of the views of the *falāsifa*, the scrutiny of them, and the attempt to find solutions and alternatives to them when necessary.¹¹⁶ This work, therefore, is far from being an Ash‘arī or a *kalām* work; for al-Rāzī aims neither to explicate the principles of faith rationally, nor to refute deviant doctrines, but to arrive at knowledge through purely rational means, and (rather modestly) to comment on the views of the *falāsifa*. And indeed the work has a structure fit for a *falsafī* work, albeit unusual in some ways, and its approach is much more akin to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's approach than that of the *mutakallimūn*. From about the stage of the *Mabāḥith* onwards, al-Rāzī will distinguish many of his works into ‘*kalāmī*’ and ‘*falsafī*’ ones.

¹¹² This occurs apparently from the stage of *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, which, in my opinion, was authored after the *Nihāya*, and was his first major *falsafī* work.

¹¹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, pp. 389; 413.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ibn Ghaylān's description of his contemporaries.

¹¹⁵ Cf. what al-Rāzī says to al-Mas‘ūdī, p. 158 *supra*.

¹¹⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 3–5.

In the *Mabāḥith*, however, he appears still not to have full mastery of *falsafa*. Although this work contains much criticism of Ibn Sīnā, al-Rāzī frequently copies passages from his books and from the *Mu'tabar* of Abū al-Barakāt uncritically. The *Mabāḥith*, therefore, appears experimental and contains much confusion and contradiction, both internal and in relation to al-Rāzī's usual views elsewhere.¹¹⁷ In a slightly later *falsafī* work, the *Mulakkkhaṣ*, which is akin to the *Mabāḥith* in structure, but also includes a chapter on logic, his thought appears more consistent and independent from Ibn Sīnā. Interestingly, the reader is referred, in places in the *Mulakkkhaṣ*, to al-Rāzī's *kalām* works for topics that are better discussed in that context¹¹⁸ – which suggests that he now views his *kalām* and *falsafa* works as complementary. This work was followed by the commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, which is al-Rāzī's most complete dedicated criticism of *falsafa*. Yet the work, dubbed by some as a 'diatribe' (*jarḥ*), rather than a commentary (*sharḥ*), is generally not negativist in the style of the *Tahāfut* or al-Mas'ūdī's *Shukūk*. Rather, in addition to explaining Ibn Sīnā's statements, al-Rāzī agrees with him on many issues, and continually attempts to provide philosophical alternatives to the views he disagrees with.

After spending 'a good part of his life' concentrating on *falsafa*,¹¹⁹ al-Rāzī's attention apparently returns to *kalām*; he thus writes a number of works within the genre, most notably the *Arba'īn*, the *Muḥaṣṣal*, and the *Ma'ālim*. These works, however, are very different from classical Ash'arī works, including his early *Ishāra*.

Consider the *Muḥaṣṣal*. Its earlier title, *Al-Anwār al-Qiwāmiyya fī al-asrār al-kalāmiyya*, indicates a *kalām* orientation,¹²⁰ whereas its later title, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-al-muta'akkkhirīn min al-'ulamā' wa-al-ḥukamā' wa-al-mutakallimīn* (*Compendium of the Thoughts of Ancient and Later Scholars, Philosophers and Mutakallimīn*), indicates an

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., the contradiction in al-Rāzī's views on pleasure (*Mabāḥith*, 1, 388–9; 2, 427), underlined by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (*Al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya*, 9 vols. [Beirut, 1990] vol. 4, pp. 119–20).

¹¹⁸ E.g. providence, ethical value, and proof of prophecy (al-Rāzī, *Al-Mulakkkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma wa-al-manṭiq*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hunt 329, fols. 320b–323a; 351a).

¹¹⁹ See p. 163 *supra*.

¹²⁰ Which also finds expression in the later version of the book's introduction, where al-Rāzī describes it as a summary (*mukhtaṣar*) in *kalām* (*Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 80).

eclectic orientation.¹²¹ The book, indeed, is highly eclectic in content, and contains discussions of a rich mixture of views and arguments from both *kalām* and *falsafa*. At the same time, its general framework and section structure show that it is *kalām*-based, while having many fundamental modifications, also signs of its eclectic stance.¹²² Similar features can be found in al-Rāzī's other later *kalām* works, albeit to varying extents. As such, the *Muḥaṣṣal* – still a *kalām* work, though a very odd one among classical works in the genre – is one of the heights of al-Rāzī's experimentalism, and marks the beginning of another major development that he introduced to the history of Muslim thought, namely the synthesis between *kalām* and *falsafa*. One begins to find much *falsafa* in al-Rāzī's *kalām* works, and much *kalām* in his *falsafī* works. (It will require many studies to explore the numerous particular aspects of this synthesis, our concern here being with the underlying framework and methodology.) His last (and unfinished) major work, his philosophical and theological *magnum opus*, the *Maṭālib*, is truly representative of the stage at which al-Rāzī's synthesis of the two disciplines becomes complete. In structure, it cannot be categorised as a book of either *kalām* or *falsafa*.

As mentioned, one of the indications of this synthesis is al-Rāzī's adoption of a new objective for metaphysical speculation. At the early stage of *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, he was interested, as were most Ash'arīs, solely in apologetics. However, pursuing this concern had yet a further, ultimate objective. For previous *mutakallimūn* viewed theological speculation as a form of action, to which a ruling may apply. To the question, "Why theological reflection (*naẓar*)?", most (al-Ghazālī not included) would respond, "Because it is obligatory (*wājib*)", and would proceed to prove its obligatoriness. Al-Rāzī writes:

The commonly-accepted explanation of the obligatoriness of reflection is [as follows]. Knowing God, exalted, is obligatory, and it can only be attained through reflection. What is a basis for a categorical obligation, and falls within the capacity of the obligated agent (*mukallaf*), is obligatory, as will be explained in the [science of] the principles of jurisprudence.¹²³

¹²¹ This title was a phrase already present in the earlier version of the book's introduction, as a description of its contents (*Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 80, editorial note 2).

¹²² The section structures of some of al-Rāzī's works will hopefully be examined in a future study.

¹²³ Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 130.

Both previous Ash‘arīs and al-Rāzī consider rational reflection obligatory, not intrinsically, but Legally. According to al-Rāzī (but not to many previous Ash‘arīs), this means that it is connected to considerations of afterlife reward and punishment. He writes:

*Problem: The obligatoriness of rational reflection is based on scripture, contra the Mu‘tazila and some Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī fuqahā’. Our evidence is: [1] [God’s] saying, “We would not punish until we had sent a messenger”.*¹²⁴ [2] Since the basis of obligation is [afterlife] reward and punishment, and since none of God’s acts can be [morally] bad, the mind alone will be unable to make conclusive judgements with respect to [afterlife] reward and punishment. Thus, it will not be possible to arrive [by the mind alone] at the obligatoriness [of reflection].¹²⁵

Yet, from the stage of the *Mabāḥith* onwards, al-Rāzī considers the primary purpose of speculation to be attaining knowledge of the nature of being, which in turn is sought to attain happiness (*sa‘āda*) and perfection (*kamāl*). He does not negate its Legal dimension, but considers it secondary and aimed at affirming the primary objective. From this stage onwards, he will affirm: (a) the existence of the rational human soul, separate from the body; (b) an intellectual pleasure that man may experience at the spiritual, rather than the bodily, level; and (c) a spiritual afterlife, in addition to the physical one. These are views that he rejects earlier in the *Nihāya*, where he adopts traditional Ash‘arī views on these issues, e.g. that the ‘nature of man’ (*ḥaqīqat al-insān*) is purely material.¹²⁶ With these later, primarily *falsafī* influences, his notion of the goodness (*khayriyya*) (rather than obligation) of metaphysical speculation and knowledge becomes that the soul is perfected by knowledge, and that it realises, by this acquisition, a happiness that surpasses all sensory pleasures. The soul also survives the death of the body, and experiences posthumous happiness or misery in accordance with its level of perfection or imperfection. As knowledge becomes the constituent of the soul’s perfection, the pursuit of knowledge, i.e. rational reflection, becomes almost intrinsically good.

In al-Rāzī’s later works, more emphasis is put on this perfectionist outlook, to the extent that even the phenomenon of prophecy becomes explained and justified with reference to it.

¹²⁴ Qur. 17 (*al-Isrā’*): 15; cf. Qur. 10 (*Yūnus*): 101, which al-Rāzī cites elsewhere.

¹²⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, p. 134.

¹²⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Nihāya*, fols. 252b; 262b–263b.

He writes, in the *Maṭālib*, that we know that the human good lies in the attainment of perfection; and we know what human perfection, with its intellectual and practical aspects, is. Therefore, if we see a man who invites people to this perfection, we will know that he is a true prophet, whom we ought to follow.¹²⁷ Al-Rāzī also argues that since the purpose of Revealed Law is to perfect those imperfect, who are the majority of people, it should have a form and approach that serve this purpose. Thus, *e.g.*, he insists that such invitation (*da'wa*) should use a mixture of demonstrative and rhetorical arguments that inculcate fear and desire (*targhīb wa-tarhīb*), or that attract men to believe; and it should avoid both dialectical arguments and discussions of metaphysical truths that may confuse non-specialists and provoke doubts in their hearts.¹²⁸

This shows how far al-Rāzī moves away from his early *kalām* outlook. Theology is no longer viewed as being in the service of scriptural creed, by providing theoretical support. Instead, Revelation itself becomes primarily a means to the ultimate goal of intellectual perfection, rather than to communicating theological knowledge to men, whether explicitly or through metaphors. Scriptural theological statements serve their function in various ways, *e.g.* their style and rhetorical arguments; and, as such, they often should not be interpreted literally. Thus, Qur'ānic statements that seem to affirm human choice instil senses of responsibility and divine justice within believers' hearts, whereas Qur'ānic statements that seem to affirm destiny emphasise a notion of God's greatness – both ends being essential for piety. Yet, al-Rāzī argues, the two types of statement are irreconcilable from a formal theological standpoint; and to attempt presenting the average believer with a formal, demonstrative theological solution to the problem will both undermine the perfectionist objective of these statements and only instil doubts in his heart.¹²⁹

We saw that al-Rāzī mixes the topics of *kalām* and *falsafa*, while adopting the *falsafī* notions of the human good and (consequently) of the final objective of rational reflection. How does he then view the relation between the subject-matter of

¹²⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 8, 103–25.

¹²⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 8, 116–8. This topic is examined at length in my forthcoming study on al-Rāzī's ethics.

¹²⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 8, 117–8.

theology and its objectives? As classical books of *kalām* investigate the theological foundations of religion, they discuss the existence and nature of God and aspects of His relation to this world and human beings. Knowing the natures of created things has no soteriological value, except in their being signs for the existence of God. On this, Ibn Khaldūn comments:

Recent *mutakallimūn* [. . .] mixed the problems of *kalām* with those of *falsafa*, because of the overlap in their topics and the similarity between *kalām* and metaphysics in subject-matter and problems. Both, thus, came to be as if one and the same discipline. They then changed the order in which the philosophers [had treated] the problems of physics and metaphysics, and they merged [*kalām* and *falsafa*] into one and the same discipline. So they first discussed general matters, then followed it by [discussing] corporeal things and what relates to them, spiritual things and what relates to them, and so forth to the end of the discipline. This is what the Imām Ibn al-Khaṭīb [al-Rāzī] did in *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, as well as all later *mutakallimūn*. *Kalām* thus became mixed with the problems of *falsafa*, and [*kalām*] works were filled with them, as if the purpose of their subject-matters and problems was one and the same.¹³⁰

The *Mabāḥith* does indeed contain a physics section. Yet it is a book on *falsafa* with a strong influence from *kalām*, not, as Ibn Khaldūn suggests, a book on *kalām* with a strong influence from *falsafa*, nor a synthesis of the two disciplines. The same is true of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* and *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. Al-Rāzī in fact does not include sections on physics in his *kalām* works; and the *Maṭālib*, the culmination of his synthesis between *kalām* and *falsafa*, deals with metaphysics, but not physics. This relative neglect of physics in the context of *kalām* appears due to al-Rāzī's adoption, not of a classical *kalām* stance, but of a certain notion of human perfection.¹³¹

Let us consider first Ibn Sīnā's notion of human perfection:

The perfection that is specific to the rational soul is for it to become an intellectual [micro]cosm imprinted with the form of the cosmos, the cosmic order, the good that emanates upon it from its Principle, down to the higher spiritual substances, to those which have some connection to

¹³⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, pp. 413; cf. 389.

¹³¹ The appearance of sections on physics in some later *kalām* works is due to the influence of more than one of al-Rāzī's works on some later Ashā'ira. The *Mawāqif* of al-Ījī is heavily influenced by the *Mabāḥith*, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, the *Muḥaṣṣal*, the *Arba'īn*, and others, including, in some places, the *Maṭālib*. This later synthesis between al-Rāzī's own works, including *kalām* and *falsafī* ones, regardless of their chronology, lead to the introduction of physics into *kalām*, referred to by Ibn Khaldūn.

bodies, down to the higher bodies, their forms and powers, and so forth, until it fulfils, in itself, the form of being in its entirety, and becomes an intellectual [micro]cosm parallel to the existent [macro]cosm in its entirety, witnessing what is the absolute good and absolute beauty, united with it, and having its form engraved in it.¹³²

Attaining these cognitions will require the mastery of both metaphysics and physics, which entails that only a philosopher can attain this perfection. Al-Rāzī rejects this notion of perfection from an early stage. He writes, in the *Mulakkhkhaṣ*, after refuting Ibn Sīnā's proofs for intellectual pleasure (which occurs at the realisation of perfection):

We do not deny rational pleasure, nor that it is more effective than other [pleasures]. But this is not provable by logical proofs. Nevertheless, not all that cannot be proved in this way should be rejected. [. . .] The only way to definite belief in it is to experience it. The more one is drawn away from physical attachments, and attracted to divine knowledge, the greater will his share of it be. God has bestowed it upon me, in both sleep and wakefulness, once and again, after my belief in it strengthened and my soul became more attuned to it.

He then describes human perfection in Sufi terms; e.g. annihilation (*fanā'*), love, remembrance (*dhikr*) and spiritual experience (*dhawq*). It is only the knowledge and love of the most perfect being, God, al-Rāzī insists, that constitutes this perfection. He continues:

What the dilettante think – that knowledge of any intellectual matter is a cause for intellectual pleasure – is false. Pleasure only results from knowing God, exalted, and from being immersed in loving Him. Therefore, since human intellects attain knowledge of God only by knowing His acts, the greater the knowledge of them, and the more complete the perception of His design, the more complete will loving Him and finding pleasure in loving Him be.¹³³

As such, knowing the world and its various parts does not constitute an essential aspect of human perfection. And the possibility of there being other routes to this end is not excluded; non-philosophers too can attain perfection and happiness.

The importance of this stance appears in two major ways. First, it downgrades sciences that are not directed immediately

¹³² Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā'*, *Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. I. Madkour *et al.*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 425–6.

¹³³ Al-Rāzī, *Mulakkhkhaṣ*, fol. 326a–b. And his rejection of the *falsafī* proof of intellectual pleasure: fols. 323b–326a. Cf. *Ma'ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Ṭ. Sa'd (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 113–4.

at knowing God and that are considered by Ibn Sīnā as essential for human perfection, including most of physics. Instead, the route to human perfection will involve only those questions that relate to God's existence, His attributes and acts, including creation, prophecy, and the afterlife, constituting what al-Rāzī terms the 'science of divinity-proper' (*al-ilāhiyyāt al-mahḍa*).¹³⁴ The great overlap between these topics and those of *kalām* seems to have determined the nature of al-Rāzī's synthesis, the most representative work of which is not the *Mabāḥith*, but *al-Maṭālib al-'āliya min al-'ilm al-ilāhī*, which al-Rāzī introduces as follows: "This is our book on the science of divinity (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*), which is called in the language of the Greeks 'theology' (*uthūlūjyā*)."

The second important feature of this notion of human perfection, as constituted of knowing God alone, rather than the universe and its parts, is that it demonstrates an inclination to Sufism. This marks a significant transition in al-Rāzī's thought; for his earlier theological works do not show Sufi influence, and in fact contain criticism of some Sufi notions. At some stage after *Nihāyat al-'uqūl*, al-Rāzī adopts the view that there are two paths to knowing God: the path of theological speculation (*naẓar*) and that of spiritual discipline (*riyāḍa*). The Sufi influence on his thought thus combines to the *falsafī* influence – a subject that I will leave for future studies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We saw that during the 6th/12th century, interest in philosophy spread within mainstream educated circles, most notably among students of *fiqh* and *kalām*. Many were introduced to *falsafa* through involvement in *kalām*, or, vice versa, resorted to *kalām* following their exposure to *falsafa*. Their most important literary inspirations were the philosophical writings of Ibn Sīnā and Abū al-Barakāt, and the intellectualist criticism of *falsafa*, the *Tahāfut*. Intellectual traditions existed in the eastern Muslim lands, alongside the written sources: *falsafī* and classical *kalām* traditions, as well as a new and vibrant Ghazālian anti-*falsafī* trend. Yet this readership would not have been fully satisfied by these conflicting sources, given the lack of mature attempts to offer reconciliatory resolutions

¹³⁴ Al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 2, 448.

to the many conflicts between *falsafa* and mainstream theology; hence, the signs of intellectual confusion in this developing eclectic milieu.

This gap was to be filled by al-Rāzī, who, by his gradual synthesis of *kalām* and *falsafa*, presents, for the first time, an 'Islamic philosophy'. This timely development was exactly what the milieu required: a mature philosophy, or philosophical theology, that was seen not to conflict with orthodoxy, and that did not approach *falsafa* in an essentially negativist manner.

Following his classical Ash'arī starting point, al-Rāzī adopts an increasingly eclectic stance, while debating openly with all the philosophical and theological traditions that he came into contact with. He starts to define his position *vis-à-vis* existing intellectual trends, most importantly, as he points out in the *Mabāḥith*, the dominant *falsafī* and anti-*falsafī* trends. His debate with these elements in his dialectical milieu provided the main outlines for his own thought – an influence that can be detected in his discussions with the *falāsifa* and their critics throughout his works. Although he does not normally name the critics, and refers to them generally as *mutakallimūn*, he had a rich and living anti-*falsafī* tradition to draw upon.

The impact of al-Rāzī's innovations on later Muslim theology and philosophy cannot be exaggerated, and some of its main features are underlined by Ibn Khaldūn, who speaks of a later, post-Rāzī *kalām* tradition (*ṭarīqat al-muta'akhhirīn*), distinct from earlier *kalām*. This influence is clear, not only in almost all subsequent *kalām* works, but equally from the remarks of critics, from a wide range of religio-intellectual traditions, Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728 / 1328) traditionalist criticism being one of the most outstanding. Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716 / 1316), a *mutakallim* who is often inclined to defending al-Rāzī, writes on his influence:

Since the emergence of Islam, Muslims derived the principles and details of their religion from the Book of their Lord, the *sunna* of their Prophet and the inferences of their scholars, until, at a later stage, some people appeared, who turned away, in that regard, from the Book and the *sunna* to pure rational investigations, mixing them with *falsafī* dubiousities and sophistic fallacies. This became firmly established to the extent that it became, as it were, true [by virtue of being] customary (*ḥaqīqa 'urfīyya*), within [the discipline of] the principles of religion, such that [. . .] nothing else will be recognised as discourse (*kalām*) on the principles of religion. They were followed by people weak in

knowledge, who found a philosophical *kalām*, [. . .] and thus failed to come upon the [true] principles of religion. For, due to the customary predominance of [philosophical *kalām*], they did not know any other principles of religion. [. . .]

I saw questions that someone put to a certain scholar, which included the following question. “Should people have principles of religion? If they should not, then how could a religion not have any principles? However, if they should have principles of religion, then are they those that are circulated among people, such as [in] the books of the Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb and his followers, and the like, or other ones?”¹³⁵

Al-Rāzī transformed Islamic theology to the extent that previous *kalām* seemed irrelevant and obsolete. Perhaps this partly explains the scarcity of information on the 6th / 12th century intellectual activity examined here. Even Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī takes a step to the background, as his direct influence on later Islamic thought diminishes. Al-Rāzī’s place in later Muslim theology is somewhat comparable to that of Ibn Sīnā in *falsafa*. For it appears that almost all later theology, that of proponents and opponents alike, was done *vis-à-vis* his philosophical theology. This, however, is another story.

¹³⁵ Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī, *Al-Ishārāt al-ilāhiyya wa-al-mabāḥith al-uṣūliyya*, ed. H. Qutb, 3 vols. (Cairo, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 206–7. A comparable sentiment is echoed in the beginning of an anonymous book on theology (Awqāf Baghdād Library, MS 1712): “I have been hoping to find a comprehensive book on the principles of religion [. . .], but have been unable to find anything other than the theological books that are widely-circulated among people, which have been saturated with the principles of *falsafa*, so they provide nothing but doubt and confusion” (Muhammad As‘ad Tals, *Al-Kashshāf ‘an Makhtūtāt Khazā’in Kutub al-Awqāf* [Baghdad, 1953], p. 123). Al-Ṭūsī also writes, with some exaggeration: “No trace of the books that circulate among [people], in the science of the principles [of religion], has remained [. . .] except the *Muḥaṣṣal*, [. . .]; [people] think that it is sufficient in that science, and that it cures the illnesses of ignorance and uncritical imitation” (*Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. A. Nurani [Beirut, 1985], pp. 1–2).